

XXIII.—THE FAT-TAILED LIZARD.
(*EUBLEPHARIS HARDWICKII*).

I am sending to-day per registered parcel post a specimen of a lizard found by me in the Sohelwa forests, Bahraich district, for favour of identification.

The lizard was presumably hibernating inside the loose bark of a dead *Sal* (*Shorea robusta*) tree and fell down when the bark was removed. It hardly made any attempt to run away.

I saw this same kind of lizard once before (last year) in identical circumstances but I have never seen one crawling about even in the hot weather. The lizard therefore is either extremely rare or extremely shy or nocturnal in its habits or lives on top of high trees. I purposely do not mention burrows in the ground because none have been found in cuttings made for forest roads.

I shall feel obliged if you will kindly let me know its scientific name.

You may do what you like with the specimen.

CAMP VIA SEMRA,
P. O. PACHPERWA,
DIST. GONDA, U. P.
February 16, 1932.

J. N. ONIAL,
Range Forest Officer.

[The lizard sent is an example of the Fat-tailed lizard (*Eublepharis hardwickii*); a species closely connected to the geckos from which it is distinguished externally by the possession of moveable eye-lids. Two species occur in India. *E. macularius* is found in the dry regions of the Punjab, Sind, Gujerat and the Deccan. The present species occurs in Central India, the United Provinces and Bengal. Of the two, *E. macularius* appears to be more common; it is more in evidence perhaps because of the open nature of the country which it lives in. It is entirely a ground lizard feeding on insects. A specimen lived in captivity in the Society's rooms for about 11 years. Nothing is known of the habits of *E. hardwickii*, and Mr. Onial's note is therefore of interest. It is possible that this lizard hibernates, or becomes sluggish during the cold weather. The Common Blood-sucker (*Calotes versicolor*) displays the same habit.—EDS.].

XXIV.—SOME NOTES ON WATER MONITORS IN THE
GARO HILLS, ASSAM.

Water monitors are fairly common in the rivers of the Garo Hills especially in the Sinsang or Someswari. Garos distinguish three varieties which they call *Aringga*, *Matphu* and *Phusil*. Speaking generally, they refer to all three as *Aringga*. Though several young monitors have been brought to me alive, I have never seen a full-grown specimen in the Garo Hills. The only difference I could see in the specimens brought me was that the markings varied *Aringgas* have very clearly defined yellow spots, while *Matphu*

and *Phusil* had rather more clouded yellow markings. *Matphu* and *Phusil* are said to be dangerous animals which drag men under water and suck their blood. Garos however tell me that all three come into the fields to eat melons, cucumbers and the ears of paddy, which does not fit in well with their alleged vampirish propensities. *Aringga* according to Garo legends is a kindly beast and the friend of Man. I have heard many tales of people who are said to have been killed by water monitors but have never yet found a case which can be regarded as authentic. At Rongrenggiri, there is a deep pool in the Simsang River, said to be inhabited by these lizards and I was told a long story about a woman, who was dragged out of a boat, as she was crossing the river with a party, returning home after celebrating the Wangala feast in another village. Investigation showed that most of the party were suffering from the effects of too hearty celebrations and that the probability was that the unfortunate lady had merely fallen into the river and been drowned. During the two periods I was stationed in the Garo Hills, I have heard quite a number of similar stories in all of which, however, the case against the monitor proved to be based on the flimsiest foundations. None the less, Garos are firmly convinced that water monitors are most dangerous animals, and both fear and revere them, regarding them as not far removed from water spirits. Carved figures of *Aringgas* are to be found on the Bachelor's Houses of the Atong and Ganching Garos and the Dawa clan of Garos is descended from a man called Dawa who was a friend of the *Aringga*.

The only full-grown water monitor that I have seen was in the Kolodyne river in the Lushai Hills. It was sitting on a rock and slid off into the water as my boat approached. Lushais do not fear monitors nor have they any legends about them. This is possibly because Lushais do not build their villages on the banks of the rivers, while the Atong and Ganching Garos all live on the river banks.

The legend of Dawa and the *Aringga* is as follows :

Once upon time a young man called Dawa caught a little *Aringga* which was feeding on the melon flowers in one of the village fields. He put the little *Aringga* into a cage and gave it melons and other fruits to eat. Meanwhile the parents of the little *Aringga* came to visit their child in captivity every day. When Dawa saw these two large *Aringgas* come to his house daily, he thought that they must be the father and mother of his captive and, knowing that the home of the *Aringgas* was the river, he became very afraid lest, when he was in a boat or swimming in the river the *Aringgas* should take vengeance on him or on his people because he had captured their child. Dawa therefore decided to release the little *Aringga* but, before doing so, in order to please its parents he placed earrings in its ears and dressed it in a yellow coat. Then he made a solemn promise to the *Aringga* never to catch any Monitors, again and begged the *Aringga* on his part not to try to kill any man swimming in the water provided that he called out 'I am a son "of Dawa.' After this Dawa released the little *Aringga* who became his friend and used to carry Dawa across the water on his back. Since then the *Aringga* has been the friend of man. To this day, Garos when

swimming in a river or crossing a river in a boat, call out 'I am a son of Dawa', they also never try to kill *Aringgas* and, if a Garo catches an *Aringga*, he puts rings in its ears and releases it.

Another story explains why carvings of *Aringgas* are found on Bachelor's Houses (Nokpante).

Once upon a time two young men called Aning Krang Ratcha and Chanang Gitting Pante built themselves a Bachelor's House in the Lower Regions and passed their time in it very pleasantly drinking wine, playing drums and singing about old times. One day a mortal, called Demarachi Mande Jagitang who dwelt upon the earth, heard the sounds of singing coming as it seemed from the Lower Regions and tried to find out whence the sounds were coming. When he listened carefully the sounds which at first had seemed to come from below the earth, appeared to come from the sky and when he thought the sounds were coming from the sky and consequently listened in that direction, the sounds again seemed to come from below the earth. At last a man called Katchipa succeeded in pulling aside the screen separating the earth from the Lower Regions and saw inside the earth a huge Bachelor's House from which came the sounds of singing and merriment. Katchipa persuaded the people to build a similar bachelor's house on earth and taking with him Dingara, Radinga, Rinda and Sindato went to a blacksmith who had learnt how to make *daos* and axes from Rohon Pante the blacksmith of the Lower Regions. Having obtained all the tools they required from Rohon Pante, they collected wood and bamboos and thatching grass and built a Bachelor's House. On the cross beams of this first Bachelor's House they carved figures of the *Aringga* of the Lower Regions and of Sangkni of the deep waters, a water snake. Menpa and Radinga painted these figures in colours and since then Garos have always carved figures of *Aringga* and of Sangkni on their Bachelor's Houses.

COOMBE FISHACHE HOUSE
IPPLEPEN, S. DEVON.

N. E. PARRY.

December 4, 1931.

[Two species of monitor are known to occur in the area about which Mr. Parry writes, the Common Monitor, [*Varanus monitor*, (*bengalensis* of Boulenger)] and the Water Monitor (*V. salvator*). The young of both species are handsomely marked with more or less distinct ocelli arranged in bands which disappear with age; though in the Water Monitor, the yellowish markings on the belly and the lower flanks are noticeable even in adult specimens—while the adult Common Monitor is generally a drab grey. In India, the young of the Common Monitor is commonly believed to be deadly poisonous and with a few other, equally harmless lizards, is associated with the mythical 'Bis Cobra' which is said to poison people from a distance of many feet. None of our Monitors is poisonous. Their jaws, armed with pointed teeth, can inflict a painful bite, while the muscular tail vigorously lashed out makes an effective weapon.—EDS.]